

The Story of the Holocaust Told Through Art
The Struggle for Survival and Freedom by Paul Gordon*
(This image is excerpted from the painting by Paul Gordon.)

Objectives:

- Students will recognize and understand the importance of the arts in preserving and telling the human story.
- Students will be able to analyze the art work to understand how the artist has used his art to present the inhumanity of the Holocaust and to make a record of the horror and tragedy of that time.

Questions for Discussion

1. Examine the art work closely. The artist has included several written words as well as a variety of images of people and objects. List the three terms and explain how each relates to the Holocaust. What is the significance of the swastika?
2. What is the importance of the railroad to the Holocaust? Why do you think the artist painted a skull or death-like mask hovering over the train? How does this image convey the horror of the Holocaust?
3. The artist has included images of individual persons and groups of people in the painting. Locate each individual and group and explain why each represents part of the story of the Holocaust.
4. The image of the young boy with raised hands is very similar to a famous photo snapped in the Warsaw Ghetto. A poem written about that famous photo is called "The Little Smuggler." Research the photo and poem on the Internet. How do the photo, the poem, and Gordon's art work tell the story of the Holocaust? (Suggested web sites for your research may be found in the appendices of the middle school and high school curriculum guides developed by the NJCHE.)
5. Art work created by inmates of the concentration camps are included in the NJCHE curriculum guides. In the guide for the middle school, **To Honor All Children: From Prejudice to Discrimination, to Hatred...To Holocaust,** information and images may be found on pages 300-314B. In the guide for the high school, **The Holocaust and Genocide: The Betrayal of Humanity,** information and images may be found in Volume I on pages 456-467. Using the grade appropriate curriculum guide for your grade, examine the works of the artists. What events and emotions are portrayed through the scenes in the art work? Give specific examples. Compare and contrast these to the images and emotions evoked by the art work of Paul Gordon. How do the art works, the events and the emotions differ? How are they similar?
6. The divider pages in the high school curriculum guide (both volumes I and II) contain photos of sculptures created by the sculptor Nathan Rapoport. Examine these photos. Identify some of the events and emotions of the Holocaust that are represented in the sculptures. How do the art works of the camp inmates, the art work of Paul Gordon, and the art work of Nathan Rapoport convey some of the same emotions and events although each work of art is quite different? After examining several of the works carefully, explain how you believe each artist accomplished this.

*The New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education extends its appreciation to the artist Paul Gordon for his permission to use his work. The art work and accompanying lesson are made available to you courtesy of the NJCHE. NJCHE may be contacted by telephone at (609)292-9274 or by e-mail at holocaust@doe.state.nj.us.

